

Rhode-Island Baptist.

EDITED BY ALLEN BROWN,

Preacher of the Gospel.

Vol. I.

APRIL, 1824.

No 7.

How President Edwards formed his opinion on the decrees

(Concluded.)

Should we stop here with our remarks, it might be asserted, that in quoting him on this subject we had not regarded an important circumstance which he states. Lest it should be, we will mention it. *It is this:* After stating that he could never give an account how, or by what means, he was convinced of the truth of Calvinism, he adds, "not in the least imagining at the time, nor for a long time after, that there was any extraordinary influence of God's spirit in it." No doubt many pious people have concluded from this, that the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, convinced him of the truth of Calvinism. Perhaps many will still think so. We, however, for ourselves, object to such a conclusion, and will give our reasons.

In the first place, though the language of President Edwards seems to imply that it was the Holy Spirit that convinced him, it does not amount to an assurance that this was his opinion. And, beside, if it did, it would

actually contradict what he had previously stated, which was, that he never could give an account how, or by what means he was convinced. But this could not be true, were he able to say, that it was by the Holy Spirit of God.

But should we understand him as saying, that though he could not at the time, nor for a long time after, give any account of how he was convinced, yet now he could, we should still object to "*imagining*" with him that it was by the Holy Spirit; for this would be the whole strength of the position or conclusion—he *imagined* it was the Holy Spirit.

It may not be amiss in this place to state the manner in which Lord Herbert, an English infidel, was convinced that he ought to publish his favourite work, "*De Veritate*."

"Being thus doubtful in my chamber, one fair day in the summer, my casement being open towards the south, the sun shining clear, and no wind stirring, I took my book, *De Veritate*, in my hands, and kneeling on my knees, devoutly said these words:—O thou eternal God, author of this light which now shines upon me, and giver of all human illuminations, I do beseech thee, of thine infinite goodness, to pardon a greater request than a sinner ought to make: I am not satisfied enough whether I shall publish this book: if it be for thy glory, I beseech thee give me some sign from Heaven; if not, I shall not publish it. I had no sooner spoken these words, but a loud, though gentle noise, came forth from the Heavens, (for it was like nothing on earth,) which did so cheer and comfort me, that I took my petition as granted, and that I had the sign I demanded; whereupon I resolved to print my book. This, how strange soever it may seem, I protest before the eternal God, is true; neither am I any way superstitiously deceived herein; since I did not only clearly hear the noise, but, in the serenest sky that ever I saw, being without all cloudy, did, to my thinking, see the place from whence it came."

Who will not say that this was the very extravagance of enthusiasm? Yet we submit to any reasonable person whether the English infidel has not the advantage of President Edwards? None, to be sure, will say that Lord Herbert was justified in opposing the truth of God, but all will say, that he took more pains to ascertain what he probably considered to be his du-

ty, on the subject mentioned, than our great Divine, to form his theological creed.

Again—Though we love the doctrine of divine influence, and of special divine influence too, and take great pleasure in reading what we consider to be the holy exercises of President Edwards, we could not allow that he received a revelation on the subject of Calvinism, unless he could satisfactorily prove that God had selected him for this purpose. We should require his credentials—the work of miracles, or some equally satisfactory testimony.

Again—It would not be safe for the Christian church to admit such a principle. Did they, what vagaries of the imagination might not be received as Divine truth! Emanuel Swedenburgh's would multiply faster than the frogs of Egypt. How much mischief has been already done by pretenders to inspiration. There is but one true word of prophecy, and that is the Holy Bible.

Again—Though we love the doctrine of Divine influence, we apprehend that it has more to do with the sinner's heart, than with his head. The word, the Bible, is written for his head, but this reaches not his heart without the influence of the *word*, the spirit. Many, if not all impenitent sinners, have light enough in their minds to know that they are sinners, but are not convicted of it, or convinced evangelically, i. e. in their hearts. Here it may be objected, that the Saviour promised that the Holy Ghost should lead his disciples into all truth. But there are several limits to this promise. The first, is that which confines it to spiritual or religious truth. It did not lead them into the truths of the arts and sciences, and literature and politicks, nor of any other of this nature. The second, is that which confined it to those things which were essentially necessary to complete the apostolick character, and the establishment of his church on the earth. Nothing more was necessary, and the Lord does nothing in vain. All the Apostles were not equally favoured with revelations, for we must consider that we are now speak-

ing of revelations. Paul was more highly blessed than the others. The third, is that which limits it to the Apostles. Some scriptures must of necessity be interpreted of the Apostles alone, or to the Christians living in the first ages of the gospel. The mention of one passage will be sufficient. It is from the apostolick commission to preach the gospel to every creature. "These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." In like manner the passage above must be chiefly construed, though there is a sense in which the spirit leads all Christians into truth, such truth as is consistent with the word of God. It disposes the heart to receive and love the truth as it is in Jesus. To strengthen our position, we offer, as a kind of korollary, the following thought: If no revelation by the spirit can be admitted but that which is agreeable to the word of God, there is no necessity of such revelation, as the truth it suggests is already found there.

Again—We know of at least one person who thought he had a revelation on the subject of a particular doctrine much disputed in the Christian world, who afterwards thought he had another exactly contrary to it. Had he been governed by these impressions or momentary views, he had been obliged to believe both, which was not possible, as they were diametrically opposite. Supposing he had had but one, he would have probably thought, that in consequence of that impression the doctrine he was then led to believe, was contained in the holy scriptures. Having two contrary impressions it was of course impossible that he should do so. How then could he decide between these opposite lights? Only by an appeal to the holy scriptures.

Again—Many men, of eminent piety and talents, have supposed that the spirit of God led them to a very different opinion from that of President Edwards; and this, too, after much reflection. The following opinion

of Calvinism is given by an eminent preacher of the gospel, who was a native of Rhode-Island, and now slumbers in his grave. "I now view the doctrine of unconditional election to eternal life, and reprobation to eternal destruction, with abhorrence. I almost marvel, that under a cloud of darkness, my rational faculties could ever be so imposed upon, as to assent to so erroneous a sentiment. I know of no doctrine in the world, that more shockingly reflects on the character of Deity." Speaking of it in another place, he calls it "one of the grand falsehoods of the father of lies." We desire that it may be particularly regarded, that this man was not only an eminent preacher, but distinguished for devotion and piety. However great and glowing were the holy exercises of President Edwards, his were probably no ways inferior. He drank deeply into the spirit of God, and often drew living waters from the wells of salvation.

For these reasons we conclude that President Edwards was not led into the Calvinistick system by the Holy Spirit. We could give another still more cogent; that system is contrary, as we suppose, to divine revelation. But aside from this remark, what if President Edwards formed his opinion of Calvinism in this way? It suggests the following thoughts, the substance of some of which may be found in the body of our observations.

I. It would show us that great men do not always form their creeds on the strength of evidence.

II. That, therefore, their opinions should be thoroughly examined before adopted.

III. That if in argument, or on any disputed subject, the opinions of men, distinguished for piety and talents, should be admitted to weigh in the scale of truth, President Edwards' opinion on the subject of Calvinism, allowing the doctrine to be true, amounts to nothing, because of the flimsy manner in which he formed it.

IV. It is owing to nobody knows what, that he embraced the system that he did. He did not know himself, he could never tell.

V. We conclude from the character of his piety and mind, his love for the truth, and his power to reason and investigate, that had he properly examined the subject, he would certainly have embraced the opposite system. What strengthens this opinion is, he once believed it, and abandoned it without any good or sufficient reason.

VI. His writings, therefore, so far as they relate to this subject, are no authority; and whatever strength the friends of Calvinism imagine his arguments to contain in support of their creed, should be accounted by them as strength on the other side, as his volumes, on the truth of the supposition just made, had been found in, and adorned, Arminian libraries.

For the Rhode-Island Baptist

DOCTRINAL.

(*Concluded.*)

Many have confounded a *necessity of consequence* with an *absolute necessity*. As if a man swallows poison, he must die of consequence. He was therefore necessitated to swallow poison. A man murders, he must suffer death of consequence. He was therefore necessitated to murder. Men are intemperate and unchaste, they must suffer in their health and reputation of consequence; therefore, they are necessitated to commit acts of debauchery. This reasoning is as just and proper as that which has been founded on the following scriptures. "Why do ye not understand speech? Even because ye cannot hear my words." The Jews while biassed by a love of honour, rather than a regard to truth by consequence could not cordially hear and receive Christ's doctrine; and thus he said to them—"How can ye believe who receive honour one of another? He that is of God heareth my words; ye therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God." By necessity

of consequence no man can serve two masters so opposite in their demands as God and the devil. "Ye are of your father the devil, *therefore*, his works ye do." "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, whom the world CANNOT receive." This no more proves that the world, *absolutely* cannot receive the Holy Comforter, than because I assert that this scholar cannot read Greek; therefore, it is *absolutely* impossible he should learn to read it, and prepare himself to be admitted into a Greek class.

Another capital mistake is, that of confounding *prophetick* certainty, with *absolute* necessity. Although God resolved to give to Abraham and his seed the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and this was predicted by the prophets, with what propriety can absolute necessity be inferred from this? God was under no obligation to form the resolution thus to give it to them; and fact shows that their wickedness obliged them to know his breach of promise.

When prophetic sayings refer to the wicked, as in the following texts: "This cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law.—They hated me without a cause. The son of perdition is lost, that the scripture might be fulfilled. They believed not on him that the saying of Isaiah might be fulfilled; Lord, who hath believed our report?" This, I consider as expressing *prophetick* certainty, founded upon the bare foresight of what will be; but implies no more positive necessity that the act should be done, than, because I foresee this explanation will not suit a class of my readers, who are necessitarians, I therefore, shall necessitate them to continue their dislike to the truth.

This mistake arises from the two following suppositions that the simple knowledge of an event is necessarily connected with that event, to produce it; and that, because *we* cannot prophecy with absolute certainty what a free agent will do in future time, therefore God cannot do it; which is as absurd as to say, I cannot create an intelligent creature, nor comprehend

how God can create one; therefore, God can neither create one, nor comprehend how he can be created, or act when he is created.

We read, (I. Samuel, xxiii. 10—12) that David inquired of the Lord, whether Saul would come down to Keilah—and whether the men of Keilah would deliver him into Saul's hands. And the Lord said, "HE WILL COME DOWN, AND THEY WILL DELIVER THEE UP." But David departed. Saul heard of it, and did not go; nor did they deliver him up. From this, it appears that future contingencies are clearly foreseen of God. That this foresight has not the least influence on such events as contingent. And that neither scripture prophecy nor divine foreknowledge, have the least connexion with absolute necessity.

The doctrine of divine providence has also been supposed to be inseparable from that of absolute necessity; and Matthew, x. 29, and Luke, xii. 6, have been quoted to support it. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. Not one of them is forgotten before God." These passages may very well be admitted to prove God's providential care, without supposing, that from eternity he ordained that one sparrow should be killed by a cruel boy, in the nest, another starved in a cage, and another be shot by a gun. They prove only, that God's providential care extends to their preservation, and that they rise into existence, or fall, according to some law, of God's making; the effect of which he can suspend whenever he pleases. If we say, that when a sparrow, or any animal must of necessity fall to the ground and die when it is shot through the heart, or has its head cut off, or receive a mortal wound in any other way, are we bound to believe and assert every robber and assassin is under the necessity to shoot an innocent traveller, and waylay and thrust a dagger through the heart of another, against whom he has unjustly entertained malice? And might not these persons as well have come to their end by an accident, fever, or consumption, and not have had the least influ-

ence to have changed the purpose of God, that the pious shall go to glory, and the incorrigible sinner be doomed to hell.

It is hoped this very brief view of a few texts will serve, in some degree, to show the impropriety of founding a doctrine on detached passages of scripture, which, when taken in connexion with the subjects to which they are applicable, have no direct bearing on the point which they are brought to prove, and to expose the false train of reasoning by which it has been attempted to support the doctrine of absolute necessity.

J. F.

For the Rhode-Island Baptist.

EXEGETICAL.

“For the children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.”—Romans, ix. 11.

What kind of election and reprobation is the apostle here discoursing about? Is it about an absolute decree appointing some to everlasting life, and reprobating others to everlasting misery; or, only an election to the present privileges, and external advantages of the kingdom of God in this world; and a reprobation or rejection, as it signifies the not being favoured with those privileges and advantages? From a calm and dispassionate view of this, and the two following chapters, I think it must unquestionably be the latter election and reprobation, and not the former.

I. The subject of his argument is manifestly the privileges enumerated, verses 4, 5, from which he supposes the Jews were fallen, or would fall; or that for a long time they would be deprived of; for it is with regard to the loss of those privileges, that he is so deeply concerned for his brethren, his kinsmen ac-

cording the the flesh, verses 2, 3.—And it is with reference to being stripped of them, that he vindicates the word and righteousness of God, verses 6—24. *Not as though the word of God had taken no effect*, and failed, &c. proving that God, according to his purpose of election was free to confer them upon any branch of Abraham's family. Consequently, those privileges were the singular blessings, which, by the purpose of God according to election, not of works, but of him that calleth, were conferred upon Jacob's posterity. But those privileges were only such as the whole body of the Israelites enjoyed in this world, while they were the church and people of God; and such privileges as they might afterwards lose, or be deprived of; hence it could not be election to eternal life.

2. Agreeably to the purpose of God, according to election, it was said to Rebecca, the elder shall serve the younger. For, (Gen. xxv. 23,) the Lord said to her, two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of *people* shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one *people* shall be stronger than the other *people*, and the elder shall serve the younger. These are the words which signify the purpose of God according to election. It is therefore an election of Jacob's posterity, or the whole nation of Israel. It cannot be, therefore, an election to eternal life.

3. Agreeably to the purpose of God according to election, it was said to Rebecca, the elder shall serve the younger. But to serve, in scripture, never signifies to be eternally damned; nor do the blessings conferred on the younger, ever mean eternal life; but some privileges pertaining to the present life. Therefore, the purpose, according to election, must refer to such privileges.

4. The election here spoken of, took place in Abraham and his seed, before his seed were born; and then (excluding Ishmael and all his posterity,) in Isaac and his seed, before they were born; and then (excluding Esau and his posterity,) in Jacob and his seed, before they were born. But the scriptures never represent

eternal life as bestowed upon any family, or race of men in this manner; therefore, it cannot be eternal election.

5. Vessels of mercy, (verse 23,) are manifestly opposed to vessels of wrath. (verse 22.) The vessels of mercy are the whole body of Jews and Gentiles, who are called into the kingdom of God under the gospel. (verse 24.) Consequently, the vessels of wrath are the whole body of unbelieving Jews. But men are not received to eternal life, nor subjected to eternal death in collective bodies; but, according, as particular persons in those bodies have acted well or ill. Therefore, this cannot be eternal election.

6. Those who have not believed—to whom blindness has happened—on whom God shows severity—the natural branches whom God spares not—who were broken off—cast away and diminished—who had stumbled—who were a disobedient and gain-saying people—who being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about to establish their own, &c. These were the unbelieving Jews who were vessels of wrath, fitted by their sin and unbelief for destruction. Yet these were the very people, that, *as touching the original election, were beloved formerly*. And the others who had not had mercy showed to them, afterwards become the people of the living God. Therefore, neither is the election or reprobation eternal, fixing the unalterable states of those referred to.

7. The believing body of God's people, whether of Jews or Gentiles, are the children of the promise in one sense, and in whose case the *election, according to grace* stands good. These stand by faith, otherwise they shall be cut off. Be not high-minded, but fear—for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God, on them, the Jews, which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness; if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou shalt be cut off, rejected, and reprobated. This proves conclusively, that the calling and election, which the apostle is here

urging, is not absolute election to eternal life, but to the present privileges of the church; the honours and advantages of God's peculiar people; which election through unbelief and misimprovement, may be rendered void and come to nothing.

8. It is proper and just, therefore, to infer that all the passages which stand in this connexion, and which the apostle has brought to support his reasonings must be so understood and explained, as to harmonize with the doctrine he has established. But according to this principle of explication, none of these passages can consistently be adduced to support eternal election and reprobation.

9. Paul's citing the words of God to Moses, *I will have mercy and compassion, &c.* evidently alludes to his sparing a wicked, ungrateful and provoking people, to enjoy extraordinary favours and privileges as a nation. (verses 15, 16, and chap. xi. 30. Compare Exod. xxxiii. 5, 16, 19.) In making this display of his goodness, his purpose of election was manifested in continuing their gifts without repentance, i. e. without changing his purpose concerning them. Thus was his power and forbearance exercised over them, to make them vessels of honour by giving them his law and ordinances, and to raise up the Messiah from among them. But afterwards, for their sin and unbelief, to show his wrath and make his power known, in cutting off and destroying these vessels of wrath who were fitted and ripened for destruction, by having filled up the measure of their iniquities. Compare Jeremiah xviii. 6, 7, and it will be seen that the parable relates to the nation of the Jews and their privileges as the covenant people of God.

10. To prove that God does them no injustice in this, he cites the case of Pharaoh, one of the most hardened sinners with which the Jews in their history had been acquainted, and whose doom they were ready to acknowledge just. But God had borne long with him, and used many means to humble him, and when brought down to the gates of the grave, so that he, and his people said, "*We be all as dead men,*" but for the purpose

of showing his power in him, over the gods of Egypt, and that his name might be declared through all the earth as the deliverer and protector of his people, to whom he showed mercy, God raised him up from death, that he might yet stand a monument of his power and mercy. If he afterwards destroyed him for his wickedness, why might he not with equal justice, destroy the wicked Jews who hardened their hearts and filled up the measure of their sins, even though he had borne long with these vessels of wrath fitted for destruction by their many and aggravating sins; and make known the riches of his glory in receiving the Gentiles to partake the glorious privileges of his people, and call them his people, and beloved, which before had not been beloved. The election proved by this passage, cannot, therefore, be a personal election to eternal life and its counter reprobation.

COKE.

THE CHRISTIAN NAME.

(*Concluded.*)

To guard against mistakes on this head, I would observe that every man has a natural and legal right to judge and choose for himself in matters of religion; and that is a mean supple soul indeed, and utterly careless about all religion, that makes a compliment of this right to any man, or body of men upon earth, whether pope, king, parliament, convocation, or synod. In the exercise of this right, and searching for himself, he will find that he agrees more fully in lesser as well as more important articles with some particular church than others; and thereupon it is his duty to join in stated communion with that church; and he may, if he pleases, assume the name which that church wears, by way of distinction from others; this is not what I condemn. But for me to glory in the denomination of any particular church as my highest character: to lay more stress

upon the name of a presbyterian or churchman, than on the sacred name of christian; to make a punctilious agreement with my sentiments in the little peculiarities of a party the test of all religion; to make it the object of my zeal to gain proselytes to some other than the christian name; to connive at the faults of those of my own party, and to be blind to the good qualities of others, or invidiously to misrepresent or diminish them; these are the things which deserve universal condemnation from God and man; these proceed from a spirit of bigotry and faction, directly opposite to the generous catholick spirit of christianity, and subversive of it. And yet how common is this spirit among all denominations! And what mischief has it done in the world! Hence proceed contentions and animosities, uncharitable suspicions and censures, slander and detraction, partiality and unreasonable prejudices, and a hideous group of evils, which I cannot now describe. This spirit also hinders the progress of serious practical religion, by turning the attention of men from the great concerns of eternity, and the essentials of christianity, to vain jangling and contest about circumstances and trifles. Thus the christian is swallowed up in the partisan, and fundamentals lost in extra-essentials.

My brethren, I would now warn you against this wretched mischievous spirit of party. I would not have you entirely sceptical and undetermined even about the smaller points of religion, the modes and forms, which are the matters of contention between different churches; nor would I have you quite indifferent what particular church to join with in stated communion. Endeavour to find out the truth, even in these circumstantial, at least so far as is necessary for the direction of your own conduct. But do not make these the whole or the principal part of your religion; do not be excessively zealous about them, nor break the peace of the church by magisterially imposing them upon others. 'Hast thou faith in these little disputables?' it is well; 'but have it to thyself before God,' and do not disturb others with it. You may, if you

please, call yourselves presbyterians and dissenters, and you shall bear without shame or resentment all the names of reproach and contempt which the world may brand you with. But as you should not be mortified on the one side, so neither should you glory on the other. A christian! a christian! let that be your highest distinction; let that be the name which you labour to deserve. God forbid that my ministry should be the occasion of diverting your attention to any thing else. But I am so happy that I can appeal to yourselves, whether I have during several years of my ministry among you, laboured to instil into you the principles of bigotry, and make you warm proselytes to a party: or whether it has not been the great object of my zeal to inculcate upon you the grand essentials of our holy religion, and make you sincere practical christians. Alas! my dear people, unless I succeed in this, I labour to very little purpose, though I should presbyterianize the whole colony.

Calumny and slander it is hoped, have by this time talked themselves out of breath; and the lying spirit may be at a loss for materials to form a popular plausible falsehood, which is likely to be credited where the dissenters are known. But you have heard formerly, and some of you may still hear strange and uncommon surmises, wild conjectures, and most dismal insinuations. But if you would know the truth at once, if you would be fully informed by one that best knows what religion I am of, I will tell you (with Mr. Baxter) 'I am a christian, a mere christian; of no other religion; my church is the christian church.' The Bible! the Bible! is my religion; and if I am a dissenter, I dissent only from modes and forms of religion which I cannot find in my Bible, and which therefore I conclude have nothing to do with religion, much less should they be made terms of christian communion, since Christ, the only lawgiver of his church, has not made them such. Let this congregation be that of a christian society, and I little care what other name it wears. Let it be a little Antioch, where the followers of Christ

shall be distinguished by their old catholick name, christians. To bear and deserve this character, let this be our ambition, this our labour. Let popes pronounce, and councils decree what they please; let statesmen and ecclesiasticks prescribe what to believe; as for us, let us study our Bibles: let us learn of Christ; and if we are not dignified with the smiles or enriched with the emoluments of an establishment, we shall have his approbation, who is the only Lord and Sovereign of the realm of conscience, and by whose judgment we must stand or fall for ever.—DAVIES.

ADAM'S ADDRESS TO THE EARTH.

Gabriel leads the radiant band, and now they reach the Mount of Olives, on which Adam alighting first, sinks down, and kisses the earth.

O earth! maternal land! said he, do I again behold thee! How many ages are passed away, since at my death, or rather my revival to a nobler, a better life, thou receivedst my frail cumbrous body into thy peaceful bosom! Never since that awful—happy moment, have I trod on thy surface. Thy bosom is now filled with the remains of my offspring. I salute thee, O earth! I salute you, ye remains of the dead, my children. Ye shall awake! Yes, my dear children, ye shall awake! The hours approach that shall deliver the earth from the curse brought upon it by sin; and at length, your dust, my children, rising, shall bless the gracious Saviour, who now dies for you and me. Behold the incarnate Messiah, the earth-born Creator, comes! Behold, he comes to die—to die for you!

Thus spake the first of men; then, silently looking towards Calvary, a heavenly melancholy, a sacred awe, thrilled through his whole etherial frame.

His thoughts, on beholding the Prince of Peace standing on Calvary, by the fatal Cross.

Adam, on perceiving him, could no longer contain his transports : with glowing cheek, and hair flying back, he rapidly advanced to the slope of the mountain : then sunk to the earth, while the celestial radiance, which beamed from his immortal eyes, was dimmed. He lay dissolved in the tears of joy, and love, and gratitude, which were mingled with a flood of sorrow and amazement. While all these passions, in pleasing confusion, rushed upon his soul, his thoughts burst into speech, and the angelick circle heard his suppliant voice, when, lifting up his eyes, he thus spake :

O thou Son ! thou Saviour ! thou, the great Messiah, and my Lord ! The immortals weep, when absorbed in thy love ; they, with silent admiration, mention thy thousand thousand glories, thus eclipsed—thus brightened by thy sufferings ! Ah, I call thee, Son ; then, struck with wonder, pause and weep with them ! Jesus, my Son ! rapture is in the thought ! Whither—Oh whither shall I retire to bear the pleasing, joyful grief of this inexpressible salvation ? O, ye angels, who were before me, yet not before him, look down, with wonder and amazement—look down on Jesus, my Son ! Thee, O earth, I bless ; and thee, O dust, from which I was formed—O joy—thou plenitude of joys eternal, that filled all the desires of the immortals ! O, the great, the profound, the heavenly plan ! It was thine, O Jehovah ! Thine was the glorious, the gracious plan of redemption ! Thy loving-kindness and compassion exceed the ideas of the wrapt seraph !—and thou, O Jesus, didst leave the splendour that surrounds thy throne, and all the pure, the refined, the ineffable delights of heaven, to descend to earth ; to become my Son ; to redeem my offspring from the power of sin ; to perfect redemption for man, by obtaining a glorious victory over temptations, sufferings and death ! Thus dost thou bruise the serpent's head. Rejoice, O my immortal soul, in the wonders of his love ; eternal prais-

es are due to him, who, by his sufferings and death, for us, procures eternal felicity! Stand still, ye immortal souls, and wondering, behold this abyss—this wide abyss of joy! What, ye heavens, are the moments of a mortal life to the joys of immortality! Yet, each of these is divine; each moment, when well employed, bears on its rapid wings eternal repose! This shall I, this shall you, my children, enjoy! Lend me your voice, ye celestial spirits, that through the whole creation I may aloud proclaim, that the great Redeemer is now entering the shadow of death. Arise, mankind, from the squalid earth; arise, lift up your heads; come and wash your souls in tears of pity, love and joy! The Messiah, your Creator! Brother! Friend! is on the verge of the opening grave. Ye, my children, are his beloved; for you, he dies! Come, all ye my children, to your dying Redeemer; ye, who dwell in palaces, roofed with gold, lay down your crowns and come. Ye cottagers, leave your lowly hurdled huts and come.—Alas! they hear not my voice; they hear not the voice of love. O thou, who offerest thyself a willing sacrifice. Let me, with overflowing gratitude, for ever admire thy condescending love. Complete—Oh complete, thou gracious sufferer, the mighty work. And now—but ah! what inexpressible melancholy rushes upon my heart! What sympathetick sorrow penetrates the deep recesses of my soul! Now, O Jesus! thou enterest the dismal path of death! Strengthen, O Eternal Father, me, the first of sinners, who have already seen corruption, that, with melting soul, I may behold my son, my Lord, die—die for repenting sinners!—Adam was silent.—*Klopstock.*

Mr. Editor—I send you, for insertion in the Rhode-Island Baptist, a brief extract from the December number (1822) of the Religious Informer; the article from which the extract is taken, is entitled “A general view of the Freewill-Baptist connexion.” O. F. B.

* The first church gathered of this order was in New-Durham, N. H. in the year 1780, principally by the instrumentality of Elder Benjamin Randall, who then resided in that town. Soon after, several branches were collected, which united with this church, and several preachers of different persuasions were brought to see the beauties of a *Free Salvation*, and united as fellow-labourers with Elder Randall. December 6th, 1783, the Elders and chosen brethren from the branches of the church, in committee, assembled at Philipsburg, (Me.) for the purpose of a General Meeting, at which time they agreed to hold a meeting of this kind, four times in each year, hence those meetings were called Quarterly Meetings. For the accommodation of the connection, Annual or *Yearly Meetings* have also been appointed for the purpose of receiving reports from the several Quarterly Meetings which belong to them, and the several Yearly Meetings corresponding with each other, enabled us to hear from the various parts of the country, and to know the general state of the churches. There are five Yearly Meetings, sixteen Quarterly Meetings, one hundred and fifty-eight ordained Elders, two hundred and thirteen churches, and probably ten thousand and twenty-five members in the connection."

PULPIT ELOQUENCE.

Human life is like a road, of which the termination is a frightful precipice. We were warned of it at our first step; but the law is passed, and we must continue to advance; I would willingly retrace my steps; but onward; onward; an invincible weight, an irresistible power ever hurries us, and we are compelled to advance, without resting, towards the precipice. A thousand crosses, a thousand pains trouble us on the road. Yet could I but avoid that frightful precipice! No, no; I am forced to proceed, to run; such is the rapidity of one year rolling after another. We are consoled, how-

ever, because from time to time we meet objects that divert us, limpid streams and flowers, that pass away. We are anxious to stop; onward, onward! and yet we behold all that we have passed, falling behind us, in fearful desolation, inevitable ruin. Still we comfort ourselves, because we carry off some flowers, gathered as we pass, which we see wither between our hands, from morning to evening, and some fruits, which we lose, while we taste them: enchantment! illusion all! drawn on for ever, we approach the frightful gulf; already, all around begins to be disfigured; gardens are less blooming, flowers less brilliant, their colours less lively, the meadows less smiling, the waters less clear; all is tarnished, all is effaced. The shade of death presents itself. We begin to feel the approach of the fatal gulf; but it is decreed that we must still advance. One step more; already horror agitates the scenes, the head swims, the eyes are bewildered. We must yet advance; most eagerly do we desire to return; but it is impossible; all is fallen, all has vanished!--*Bassuet.*

EXTRACT.

What an awful proof of the depravity of our world is it, that men are allowed to be *in earnest* in every thing but religion. The astronomer may be in raptures, while he gazes at the beauty and harmony of the solar system. The philosopher may be animated to the highest degree with his discoveries. The statesman may be immured in political research. The general may stimulate himself and his soldiers, and endeavour to enlist others under his banners, with all the fire of martial eloquence. This is all *rational*. This excites *admiration*. But if the Christian, contemplating that glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which causes cherubims and seraphims to burn with increasing holy ardour, is in raptures, he is an *enthusiast*. If he gives all diligence to make his calling and election to eternal

life sure ; if, in obedience to his King, and love to the souls of his dying fellow-sinners, he goes forth and endeavours to enlist them under the banners of the prince of peace, the cry is immediately raised against him. "why all this ado about religion."

THE OFFSPRING OF MERCY.

When the Almighty was about to create man, he summoned before him the Angels of his attributes, the Watchers of his Dominions. They stood in council round his hidden Throne.

"Create him not," said the Angel of Justice, "he will not be equitable to his brethren, he will oppress the weaker."

"Create him not," said the Angel of Peace, "he will manure the earth with human blood, the first-born of his race will be the slayer of his brother."

"Create him not," said the Angel of Truth, "he will defile thy sanctuary with falsehood, although thou should'st stamp on his countenance thine image, the seal of confidence."

So spake the Angels of the Attributes of Jehovah—when Mercy, the youngest and dearest Child of the Eternal, arose, and clasping his knees—"Create him, Father," said she, "in thy likeness, the darling of loving-kindness. When all thy messengers forsake him, I will seek and support him, and turn his faults to good. Because he is weak, I will incline his bowels to compassion, and his soul to atonement. When he departs from peace, from truth, from justice, the consequence of his wanderings shall deter him from repeating them, and shall gently lead him to amendment."

The Father of all gave ear and created man, a weak faltering being ; but in his faults the pupil of mercy, the son of ever active and meliorating love.

Remember thy origin, O man ! when thou art hard and unkind to thy brother. Mercy alone willed thee to be.—Love and Pity nursed thee at their bosoms.—
Herder.

ANECDOTE OF THE LATE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Two or three years before the death of this eminent servant of Christ, when his sight was become so dim, that he was no longer able to read, an aged friend and brother in the ministry, now living, called on him to breakfast. Family prayer succeeding, the portion of scripture for the day was read to him. It was taken out of Bogatsky's Golden Treasury: "By the grace of God, I am what I am." It was the pious man's custom on these occasions, to make a short familiar exposition, on the passage read. After the reading of this text, he paused for some moments, and then uttered the following affecting soliloquy:—"I am not what *I ought* to be! Ah! how imperfect and deficient!—I am not what I *wish* to be! I abhor what is evil, and I would cleave to what is good. I am not what I *hope* to be! Soon, soon, I shall put off mortality; and with mortality, all sin and imperfection! Yet, though I am not what I *ought* to be, nor what I *wish* to be, nor what I *hope* to be, I can truly say, I am not what I *once* was—a slave to sin and Satan; and I can heartily join with the apostle, and acknowledge: *By the grace of God, I am what I am!* Let us pray."

EASTERN ANECDOTE.

A certain man went to a dervise, and proposed three questions:—1st. "Why do they say that God is omnipresent? I do not see him in any place; show me where he is." 2d. "Why is man punished for crimes, since whatever he does proceeds from God. Man has no free will, for he cannot do any thing contrary to the will of God; and if he had power he would do every thing for his own good." 3d. "How can God punish Satan in hell fire, since he is formed of that element? And what impression can fire make on itself?" The dervise took up a large clod of earth and struck him on the

head with it. The man went to the cadi and said, "I proposed three questions to such a dervise, who flung a clod of earth at my head, which made my head ache." The cadi having sent for the dervise, asked, "Why did you send a clod of earth at his head, instead of answering his question?" The dervise replied, "the clod of earth was an answer to his speech: he has a pain in his head, let him show where it is, and I will make God visible to him; and why does he exhibit a complaint against me? What I did was the act of God. I did not strike him without the will of God:—what power do I possess? And he is compounded of earth, how can he suffer pain from that element?" The man was confounded, and the cadi highly pleased with the dervise's answer.

DYING MOMENTS.

"Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints.—*David.*"

The Rev. Risdon Darracott said, the night before he died, "O what a good God have I, in and through Jesus Christ! I would praise him, but my lips cannot.—Eternity will be too short to speak his praises." The Physician coming in, he said to him, "O what a mercy is it to be interested in the atoning blood of Jesus!—I come to the Lord as a vile sinner, trusting in the merits and precious blood of my dear Redeemer. O grace! grace! free grace!" His last words were: "I am going from weeping friends to congratulating angels and rejoicing saints in glory! He is coming! [Jesus.] O Speed thy chariot wheels, why are they so long in coming? I long to be gone."

The Rev. Mr. Joss, during his illness, enjoyed a solid peace; and the Lord Jesus indulged him with a peculiar manifestation of his gracious presence. Some of his last words were: "Into thy hands I commit my soul! O the preciousness of faith! I have finished my

course! My pilgrimage is at an end! O, thou friend of sinners, take thy poor old friend home!" The last word he was heard to speak, was "Archangels!" In a few minutes after, he lifted up both his hands, and smiled, and died.

Rev. Mr. Middleton, a friend and fellow-labourer of Whitfield, in the midst of his torturing pains, being asked by his daughter how he was, answered, "A HEAVEN UPON EARTH." Soon afterwards he fell asleep in Jesus.

Elizabeth Patman, a Sunday scholar, said, addressing her teacher, "Oh! could you and all my teachers know the love of Christ to my soul; I have found that Saviour whom my soul loves. After this she lived very few hours, for in the night she would have her friends called to her, and said, "I am going to glory; don't grieve for me. I long to be gone. I feel no alarm."—She was heard to say, as though resisting the suggestions of the enemy of souls, "Get thee behind me, Satan—my Saviour is here; and though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." She then commended them all to God, and said, "farewell—for me to die is gain." Shortly after, she breathed her last.

MOONLIGHT.

Bright shines the moon on the mountain's brow,
 Bright o'er the wavy sea she gleams;
 Bright shines the moon—but brighter thou
 Who cloth'st the moon with all her beams.
 O shine on me, thou holy sun!
 With healing in thy wings arise,
 And bid the night of grief begone,
 And dry the tear-drop from mine eyes.
 I cannot, will not, comfort feel,
 Whilst thou dost hide thyself afar;
 Come, Saviour, come, thyself reveal,
 Rise, day-spring, rise, my Morning Star.
 Rise on this cheerless heart of mine,
 And let me now thy glory see—
 And bid me rise—and bid me shine,
 The child of happiness and thee.—*Lond. Meth. Mag.*

This work is printed monthly, at the JOURNAL OFFICE, Providence, (R. I.) where subscriptions will be received. Terms 12 1-2 cents each number.